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THE ÉLITE OF DEMOCRACY.¹

SINCE the history of the nineteenth century is dominated by the social phenomenon of the universal tendency to promote the education of the masses, it is probable that the history of our new epoch will in turn be dominated by the action of these masses. They are already palpitating with hope. They are expressing their wishes through the agency of the individuals of their choice. By this choice they make known their tastes and their tendencies. These individuals, when chosen, are the units of the new contemporary élite, a "representative" and "variable" aristocracy.

In all civilized countries the problems of sociology are every day more imperatively demanding attention. It seems, indeed, that most of us have agreed, on principle, to work for a better social state. There is a sort of harmony between the vague but enthusiastic thoughts of a workingman summoning the new era, and the persistence of a social philosopher striving to reduce the sum of human suffering. We no longer discuss the value of the expression, "social solidarity;" some of us even pronounce these words with almost religious reverence. "Corporations" and "associations" of every kind abound. "Sociology" is bringing thinkers and people together. And the other sciences no longer disdain popularization. Their devotees are leaving the solitary heights where they formerly enjoyed a selfish pleasure. A great leveling process is going on. The era of democracy is at hand.

The social problems now pressing for solution are essentially modern. The political economists of the last century emphasized

¹Translated by Prof. W. H. Carruth, University of Kansas.

the importance of the economic conditions regulating our style of living and our social relations. Under the powerful leadership of Karl Marx the fine rhetoric of the Utopians of '89 became a system supported by exact documents. Reread *Capital*; from the spherical contact of things common conditions and laws result; the social evolution can be accomplished only as these conditions and free social intercourse are regulated. The "*laissez faire*" of Adam Smith cannot withstand the severe attacks of Lasalle upon wages and their significance. Henceforth the political ideologist must drop anchor; he may no longer sail at random toward the horizon where the mirage is rising. Let him devote his attention to the price of grain, the market quotations. On the other hand, old-time governments, whether empires or kingdoms, seem to our contemporaries antiquated forms of government, obnoxious to minds enamored of justice and anxious to balance reasons, even overlooking all the details for the sake of securing this balance and harmony. At school, on the street, in the universities, in the daily papers, the maxims that the French revolution hurled into the hearts of men are no longer subject to discussion. The words Liberty, Equality, Fraternity are no longer mere symbols of philosophic conceptions; they represent facts. At least, modern democracy has so decreed.

Its ideal is a society logically organized and perfectly equitable. Even in the somewhat advanced philosophy of M. Fournière this ideal seems the only one worthy of attainment. The right of participation belongs to all; all citizens not only have the right to take part in the common life, but they are part and parcel of the social life, which is of supreme importance, and is but the outward manifestation of their individuality. The totality of this tumultuous, swarming social life crystallizes into groups conscious of common interests, and these, solidary by reason of these interests, secure the proportional distribution of labor and compensation, according to the needs and abilities of each.

Toward this ideal modern society is tending. Political powers, though cautiously keeping up the customs of past times, are being gradually won over to this conception of the State. And the populace, the masses, having become certain of possessing not only

rights but also powers, and excited and carried away by oratorical leaders, their spiritual representatives, form organizations, and in their turn excite and carry away their leaders.

This democracy appears to be the most advanced social form, the ultimate stage. And the problem that occupies us is this :

In this organization which seems to give such exceeding importance to groups of the *élite*, what are the characteristics of the *élite* ; what are their manifestations ; what are their means of action ; what are the motives that prompt them to action ; how is the membership of the group increased ; and are they, belonging to the *élite*, really *élite*, or select, individuals ?

In order to exhaust this field of study we propose to analyze in a series of articles the whole of contemporary social psychology. We shall find the bulk of our illustrations in France, but we shall not limit our observations to this country ; we intend to speak of all the democracies that exist in the world—for example, of the United States and of Switzerland.

Forthwith, at the very threshold of this article, of this bird's-eye view which is to serve us as an orientation, we must indicate the spirit in which these essays are to be conceived. We wish to look at existing society as a mildly philosophical enquirer. We shall nowhere attempt to display erudition. We hope to express our indignations and our dislikes with more fire than is permitted by a solemn tone all inflated with learning. And here is the first source of our wrath :

Democracies, or at least the French democracy, neglect systematically to-day the select individual. The heroes whom they admire, whom they patronize, whom they elevate to rule over them, must first of all renounce their own individuality, must be nothing but the echo of the desires and the tastes of social groups. The masses admire themselves in their representatives and they admire nothing but their representatives.

And this is deplorable.

In the first attempts at human society—if we may believe the specialists who have devoted themselves to reconstructing the physiognomy of that society—the victory belonged solely to the pos-

essor of muscular power. The *élite* individual was the *strong* individual. Among savages of the present day, whom, according to Feuerbach, we must consider as belonging to a backward society yet one quite as old as our own, psychical qualities have come into play, and cunning—not to speak of intelligence—is employed in the service of brute force. The *élite* savage controls his subjects by knowing how to apply his force. He must not forget that these tribes have their traditions, their past, which compels their chiefs to follow certain paths, and which introduces new complications. But even here force retains its aureole. It is always victorious. It has been modified somewhat. Aided by cunning, by intuitive and elementary cunning, this force, which is triumphant from the social point of view, approaches perceptibly that which is manifested by every human organism in the struggle for existence. The *élite* individual exists as such among savages. It is hard to imagine that groups of *élite* could grow up among them.

Ancient societies, which became organized under the influence of divers motives—emotional, religious, economic—gave legal sanctions to these individuals. The victors united to impose their will upon the vanquished. They established castes. The superior castes determined the duties, the obligations and even the sensations of the inferior castes. India is the classic example of this sort of social formation. Here the *élite* are no longer determined in accordance with a criterium of brute force. Barriers are erected in society. Ruling families constitute the *élite*, and it is only in this privileged sphere that individuals can in their turn distinguish themselves and become *élite* individuals.

Later a new element enters into play. Among the Greeks we do not find castes, but social classes, and the *élite* are no longer exclusively the ruling class. Superior individuals may spring from any family. Generals, artists, philosophers, priests and oracles, orators and courtesans labor together to create the genius of the race. Over against Aristides, Leonidas, Themistocles—in whom, despite their readiness to sacrifice themselves for the common good, we shall perhaps recognize after all representatives of the conquerors by cunning force—over against these superior individuals, who

direct and govern, these military chiefs, arise Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, philosophers, orators, poets, tragedians, select individuals, themselves holding a very definite place in the history of their city, and this thanks to intellectual works, which present no immediate interest for the government of the city. In another study we shall return to this prodigious period. Never was the individual freer to manifest his powers. But there were so many slaves in this fair Hellos that to be born Greek was after all to belong to a superior caste.

Among the Romans this intellectual and artistic aristocracy, while not attaining quite the same prestige, exists alongside the ruling aristocracy. However, the Hellenic conception was modified; in Rome caste resumed its full power; patricians and plebeians were required by law to maintain the relation of superior and inferior.

From this point it seems as though we were returning upon our steps. The barbarian invasions restored the entire power of brute force and of cunning force. In the train of a chief galloped unorganized troops, and power of muscle alone establishes a hierarchy in the mob that follows Attila. Yet, in truth, the intellectual aristocracy was not dead; it was wretched and persecuted. In Byzantium it appears, emotional and confused. On the banks of the Bosphorus Greek metaphysics mingled with naissant Christianity and with Oriental superstitions. While the emperor, the victorious soldier, owes his throne to his force, he trembles before the religious factions which were led by individuals in a state of exaltation and intoxicated with ideas.

In the Occident when the barbarians plan to profit by their victory we see an intellectual aristocracy arise; the papacy is organized. The church, and the monasteries especially, with their monks constantly bending over manuscripts brought from the Levant and filled with the knowledge of Greek philosophy, of Aristotle and Plato, cultivate and direct the thoughts of men. And thus we have a new development—two ruling classes organizing side by side: a military and an intellectual aristocracy.

But the second of these is no longer a national élite. It has

a tendency to become a cosmopolitan aristocracy. Its power increases daily. Consider the Crusades. Here a few dreamers carry the military élite off their feet and for a time dominate force and use it for their own ends.

Next, alongside these two bodies of ruling élite—the already international church and the military nobility—there appear once more dissenting and independent élite. As in Greece, poets, philosophers, artists contribute to human development. The renaissance spreads over Italy and France. But this third élite seems to be in vassalage to the other two. The church, if it does not absorb it, is flatly hostile to it. Luther and Calvin, the reformers, are individuals who enter into conflict with the reigning intellectual élite, just as the latter in its day had combatted the military élite. The Reformation conquers a part of Europe. As happens in all such cases, its leaders labor to secure organization. The ruling intellectual élite is divided. The Catholic Church remains international. The reformed church is factional, is national, and these two powers alike oppress the individual. The Spanish inquisition scarcely surpasses the pastors of Geneva in intolerance. Michael Servetus, the revolutionary pantheist, is burned at the stake.

Nevertheless the labors of independent individuals go on. A fourth élite is created, or rather the élite consisting of artists and philosophers before the Reformation continues its task, aided and often encouraged by the monarchs.¹ It was individuals independent of all organizations who prepared the way for the French Revolution. Before this is launched we note indeed a certain number of secret societies with more or less power, which afford to these isolated individuals the opportunity to exchange views, but we think that the importance of these fraternities should not be exaggerated. The achievement of a Voltaire, of a Rousseau, was in our opinion more important than the, to be sure, interesting ac-

¹We shall examine later the part played by monarchs in relation to élite individuals. A Louis XIV., a Frederick the Great constituted, through their desire to be surrounded by men of genius, admirable unorganized élites, and thus did more for progress than the members of contemporary democracies have perhaps done hitherto.

tivity of Free Masonry. In fact, the latter will pretty nearly represent the efforts of these free individuals to transfer their conceptions from the field of abstract ideas to the domain of facts. Once again, as in the time of the Crusades and of the Reformation, the labor of individuals animates an organized, intellectual élite, which in its turn, utilizes brute or cunning force, or, in short, the military élite. After the downfall of Napoleon I, despite the power of the "congregation," the élite which really called forth the events of 1789 did not disappear. It was merely resolved into its elements. Thus it again became potent. Never were ideologists so plentiful. Economists begin to propound social problems. The coming of democracy is at hand. It is ever the same phenomenon repeated—the isolated individual of an unorganized intellectual élite prepares the way for a social revolution, and the formation of new, organized, intellectual élites; that is to say, of élites which apply themselves directly to transforming the thought of the masses in order to make use of the force of the masses.

To-day this social revolution has been accomplished in France in some measure. Before proceeding to the study of contemporary governments let us make note of the fact that we have observed constantly in this rapid survey that human evolution is guided by individuals. No sooner is an association formed to impose a new conception upon the populace than other superior individuals go to work, and it is their labor that prepares the way for the future. All the great scientific discoveries, all the great religious, metaphysical and social ideas are the work of individuals.

But there are those who claim that these individuals are, on the contrary, merely the echo of organized groups, the representatives of the universal knowledge of their day. To which it may be replied: If Lamarck and Newton, for instance, profited by this knowledge it was surely in themselves and because of their mysterious genius—mysterious, I repeat, for what do we know of the origin of genius?—that the synthesis was accomplished of all the elements which were furnished to them (this we freely admit) by organized élites.

Now they derived from this synthesis new conclusions, which

were not always accepted by those very persons to whom these constructive heroes owed the elementary materials of their structures. So that, if the *élite* individuals are the echoes of the learned multitude, we would say that they give back to this multitude their voice so transformed that they themselves do not recognize it. And this transformation, which is the peculiar work of isolated individuals, is the very kernel of progress.

It is therefore necessary, first of all and even solely, to secure to each individual his particular and especial development.

II.

The French Revolution, or at least those who prepared the way for it, seem to have recognized the value of this thought. They proclaimed the equal right of each to develop unhampered; but at the same moment in which they summoned all the masses to their share in life they found themselves face to face with a new question, the question of the relations of these equal individuals, who wished not only to live, but to individualize themselves still more, to dominate, to conquer. In order to satisfy these energies and these ambitions they attempted in theory equitably to distribute honors as well as offices; they distributed the spoils of victory to the greatest possible number, and since they were forced to retain the social categories it was demanded that they be open broadly to all citizens. Better still, they demanded that, from top to bottom of the social scale, in whatsoever category, each unit should represent other units, for to *represent* was to conquer and to control a portion of the power which governed the state. The unanimous desire to give to all the elements of the populace the impression of victory explains the creation of these representative *élites*, which took the place of the older organized *élites*, whether intellectual or military, which we shall call *fixed élites*, in contrast with the newer *élites*, which are essentially *variable*.

In the constitution of the variable *élites* of the Revolution no account was made of heredity, nor of the environment in which the individual had grown up. The principle had been propounded that

the free exertions of the units of the nation would tend naturally to realize the common ideal. The intent of every citizen should be, and they did not doubt that it would be, to improve the condition of his fellows. The fact of representing a group of men animated by this specific virtue became a new force, a new value, as Nietzsche would say. In order, therefore, to appreciate an individual, two criteria were used: He was *himself*, and he *represented others*—he had a qualitative value and a quantitative value.

But very soon the quantitative element outweighed the qualitative in the judgment of the masses, as a result of this naïve axiom; all citizens are animated by an equal love for the common ideal. Accordingly, the common ideal is the only thing that counts. Thus the qualitative element is no longer estimated excepting by its relation to the quantitative element; the moral qualities of a man, his physical or his intellectual force, are recognized only in so far as they are imposed upon other men, win their suffrages and hold the favor of the masses for a greater or less period of time.

In order to win the favor of these masses, to obtain this quantitative value, the tribunes of the Revolution tried all the ancient means of conquest. Brute force, cunning, audacity and prudence, which are only the art of employing force, were used in succession. But these ancient devices were now supported by others. A delegate had no existence unless he was sustained by an initial group, and therefore it was necessary for him to remain in contact with this group. He was obliged to please those to whom he owed his power, and he pleased them so long as he could hear their voice speaking within him, so long as he was their faithful echo. . . . Frightened by the fear of falling from favor this delegate found his field of action restricted, and he dared not overstep the limits of the "middle ground" in which centered the aspirations of his electors. And this "middle ground" was of necessity narrow, unless perchance the delegate appealed to the feelings most deeply rooted in the hearts of all men, to those primitive instincts which civilization had tried to suppress.

The victors of the variable élite of 1789 unloosed hatred, fury

and envy, not from preference, perhaps, but in order to broaden the field of action in which they wished to manifest themselves.

To be skillful in discovering the passions which stir the greatest number, to be adept in appealing to these passions, in shaping them to any use whatever, to be able to become the echo of a tumult while controlling it, in fine, to be able to assimilate oneself to the multitude, and at the same time remain oneself. Such were the qualities indispensable in these tribunes.

For a century now they have been endeavoring to instruct the multitude, to give them a common ideal which should be at the same time more complex and more noble, and the results obtained deserve to be examined with care. We shall return to this point. For the present we shall insist only upon this :

There are those who declare that the intellectual level of the masses is rising constantly through the action of its élite representatives. We believe this to be false. We believe that all the actual progress accomplished in the century past was such, owing, not to élite representatives, who were constrained, on penalty of suddenly losing their power, to avoid offending the deep feelings and the master instincts of the groups which they represented—not to élites whose intellectual level was established by the intellectual level of the multitude—but rather owing to the labor of superior individuals, who were united by no organization and whose qualitative value was not devoted to being transformed into a quantitative value.

Now, whatever be the instruction given to the multitude, only he can become a member of the governing élite, even now, whose power humiliates itself to the point of accepting as its criterium the number of expressions of admiration which it arouses.

III.

What actually becomes in modern society of these superior and solitary individuals? Formerly the victor by force among the first human families had only to struggle against other more or less robust individuals—not, however, united among themselves. The

power of this victor vanished as soon as the vanquished united when collective power was born. And the individual who has conquered hitherto by his intelligence will succumb also when he is obliged to oppose the combined intelligences of the nation. And they will surely combine against him, against his initiative, for, we repeat, the multitude can unite only for the purpose of compelling the acceptance of average ideas, of ideas already accepted by the majority of citizens.

The kingdom or the empire, despite all the criticisms directed at these institutions, were certainly more favorable to the development of these individual heroes. Whether they were already members of a caste that was elevated by law or by birth, or whether they were victorious by virtue of their nature or their intelligence, they did not have to concern themselves about an omnipotent public opinion. It is true they had to combat the prejudices of the already existing social groups. But these groups had to reckon with their own comparative isolation, and thus presented a less imposing surface of resistance than the universal coalition of average minds. Recall here, moreover, what was said at the beginning of this article—the feeling of social solidarity has penetrated even the hearts of men who have reached the highest eminences. In the name of this sentiment they judge the value of their own work according as it is, or is not, directly serviceable to humanity, and humanity responds to them by the voice of its elect, whom they call deputies, senators, ministers, members of universities and academies, and they concede the validity of this response.

The multitude has become the sovereign judge of all activities, and few there be that protest against its decisions. Through this omnipotence, which it uses for the purpose of leveling, democracy is more oppressive toward the true intellectual élite than any monarch or any religious caste that ever existed.

And if we turn now to those other élite individuals, military or political leaders, we see that the same reasoning retains all its force. Only within the brain of a single individual is the synthesis accomplished whence may spring a new deduction. Most, if not all, laws and reforms were conceived by individuals acting independently;

that is to say, acting without any concern for public opinion, without asking the multitude for its immediate approbation. And this is why, however inauspicious be the accession of a tyrant to the throne, it seems to us to be compensated and more than compensated by the accession of a genius. We confess ourselves to be the opponents of a single power, of that power which, resting upon the consent of average minds, seems to us to be committed either to inaction or to the rôle of panderer to the lowest of human passions.

The man of genius, when called to govern the people by the will of all, is obliged to restrain his initiative lest he lose the favor of all. The man of genius, who governs by right of birth, or who depends upon the good pleasure of a king, or again, who governs by right of conquest, enjoys a freedom extraordinarily wider. If hereditary sovereign of a country, he derives his fortune from the traditions and the memories of the past. These memories impose a certain general direction upon his acts, but do not at all prevent him from developing himself in this direction.

If he is minister of a king he has but to satisfy this monarch. And who will claim that it is less easy to mould the mind of an individual than the mind of a mob?

Finally, if he rules by right of conquest, he enjoys absolute liberty. His power depends upon memories which connect directly with previous manifestations of his power. He will increase it by developing his own powers logically; the limits within which he can move are precisely those which are adapted to him. Consider the enormous work accomplished by all founders of dynasties. They begin by destroying; they end by constructing. All human progress, if we admit that there is such a thing as progress, is but the succession of these two functions. Democracies are opposed to them both alike. As soon as they are in the saddle they no longer permit destruction, and they fear new constructions, or at least every construction that would rise above the common level where they stagnate. The majority of the legislators of France regard the constitution which controls their country as detestable. And yet they dare not lay hands upon it, and we doubt whether a

deputy, even had he genius, and the greatest genius, could succeed in getting his colleagues to vote for a constitution which would not, all in all, satisfy the present passions of the multitude. Now, these passions would destroy the ideal harmony of democrats. A perfect democracy seems almost committed to immobility.

Thus would the *élite* individual, who might by chance belong to a representative group, find his activity restricted. And yet, our contemporaries, in a certain measure, recognize that heroes are indispensable to them. They commend, as though it were a new religion, the worship of great men; we permit them to control us—when the marble of their statues makes them incapable of action.

IV.

And, nevertheless, these frantic agents of social leveling, these representatives of the masses, the members of the variable *élites*, are subject still to the influence of the fixed *élites*, constituted of old in accordance with the ancient criteria of force and heredity.

In our contemporary democracies the possessors of inherited power, be it the power of gold or that which gives the prestige of memories to one who bears a famous name—these, uniting, drawn together by a common regard for a certain elegance, constitute groups within which the pride of being able to accomplish more than someone else, thanks to capital, and the pride of being able to claim the past, compel the individual not to consider himself merely a social “unit.” The sons of wealthy men, the descendants of ancient noble castes, even the sons of representatives of the people, are conscious of possessing an ancient power, accumulated in them and differentiating them from other men. This consciousness is increased by the relations which they maintain with the cosmopolitan *élite*, consisting of individuals who certainly do not lack vigor, since they bear transplanting without perishing—removal from their social environment, traveling aristocrats, who, becoming the guests of a democratic people, import the mode of thought of races in which other tendencies predominate. In the

midst of such extremely complex environments we meet with another variety of conqueror; no longer the sons of the rich, but the "new men," men who have grown rich by their boldness or their energy

This aggregation of such diverse materials constitutes a superior class in the nation, a class which the representative élites admire and detest, assail and imitate. And how can it be otherwise? The elect of a group, aside from his social existence, is subject to human passions. Even if he remains merely the representative of his electors, when he exercises his governing functions, yet he is not always governing. The psychology of his private life has been written many times. We shall attempt to reconstruct it in another essay. It is crammed full of ambitions. Ambition urged him to solicit suffrages. It spurs him to raise himself into a region where power is less ephemeral, less uncertain. He wishes to demonstrate to himself that he possesses a qualitative value and not only merely the quantitative value given by his certificate of election.

Dazzling luxury and the brutal power of financiers hypnotize him. He worships a Lesseps before crushing him; he marvels at the genius of a Morgan or a Rockefeller before creating a law against trusts. He perceives that there is another glory than that which social units have bestowed on him. The rights of the great number are constantly isolated in his mind by the vigor of a single man; he must admit that the majority of the great industrial achievements are conceived in our day by individuals. And he is dazzled not only by the conquerors of wealth, but also, and perhaps even more, by those traditional castes which he has brought low and the remains of which persist in despising him. He would like to admire these castes, as a dilettante, just as he admires, though a rationalist, the manifestations of Christian art with which the museums are filled. But lo! he finds himself copying the morals, the exterior attitudes of these "fossils," of those whom he regards as fossils. If he is a politician, a member of the university or the academy, he will be caught by the fine sound of the famous name which adds to the prestige of this or that deputy or

scholar, or artist, the son of some well-known personage. The strangers also whom he meets in the embassies or the cosmopolitan salons, force upon him a certain respect for titles, for decorations, for all the symbols which distinguish men in the name of the past and in the name of heredity.

These fixed élites and these other élites which are at the same time fixed and variable, constituted by the rich, may then teach him to see in a man something else than a fragment of the mass. . . . It would be thus, perhaps, if he hoped to maintain himself in this privileged class without the support of his electors, but he knows too well that his position in the world depends upon them. The lesson that he learns by his transient sojourn among the survivors of ancient régimes is that outward organization is necessary, such as that maintained among the ancient régimes, to oppose them successfully. He joins the Free Masons; he is Grand Master of the Temple; he aspires to the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor. The pomp of Catholicism and the mysteries of the church arouse in him the thought of establishing similar ceremonies in which to shine and similar mysteries from which to derive an aureole for himself. He speaks of the religion of democracy and of its dogmas. He dreams of priests for this religion, and perhaps he fancies also that the dogmas would be better served by the scions of the distinguished representatives of the people.

And still better, since financiers have frightened and seduced him, he demands that private fortunes be subject to the control of the representative élite; he wishes ministers and members of parliamentary committees—in a word, the state—to be sole judge of the future of industrial affairs, to be free to permit or prevent development. He aspires to become a priest, a noble, a great financier. When he is not making laws this chosen one is planning to prove that his quantitative value is the guaranty of his qualitative value. He hopes that the fact of representing a great number of individuals will before long be equal to a brevet of omniscience. And he anticipates the future. He realizes his hopes by means of his decrees and his laws.

Decrees and laws ordain that he shall be a member of the élite.

V.

In truth, our fondness for sociology, this science which sees in men only fragments of a mass, interferes too much with our considering the man himself, the springs of his action, the feelings which cause him to love life for life's sake, and to love science in general, not *your* science.

A century has passed since the Revolution broke the ancient molds in order to permit all citizens to develop freely, and never was the individual who wished to develop freely more trammelled than in our day in his struggles for independence. Never was he more swallowed up in the mass. He constitutes a part of an "amorphous whole"—Society. He possesses rights only in so far as his rights do not embarrass society. He possesses no other power but that devolved upon each social unit—of naming the representative élite. As soon as he has exercised this power he becomes a subordinate wheel in a formidable machine. And even his representative, his delegate, is only a unit of another multitude, which, while commissioned to rule everything, to regulate everything in the name of society, merely devotes itself to trying to establish social *harmony*. To this harmony these beings sacrifice the originality of themselves and of others. They decree that the best morality is that which secures the good operation of the institutions which they govern. They direct us to act in such a manner that our actions will not disturb the order which they have declared necessary to the welfare of the state. They expect to prepare for the future by regulating the emotions of our children by giving them such philosophic instruction as they themselves have chosen. They teach them the code, they mould their doubts, they select their regrets and direct their enthusiasms. And all this, once more, they accomplish by laboring solely to facilitate the mutual *relations* of men.

These relations alone absorb attention. They put oil upon the wheels and do not perceive that these wheels operate because a higher power impels them. They have never turned their eyes toward this power. They do not feel it in themselves. In the motors

of to-day the oilers are automatic. They too are parts of the mechanism. It is the same with the chosen representatives of our modern élites. They consider themselves as wheels, as units of the mass.

And they cannot consider themselves otherwise. Their abnegation is natural. Are they not the results of human groups. And are not these groups brought together by the self-denial of each one for the sake of the common interests? The elector has sacrificed his individuality, of his own free will, thanks to the education which society has given him, he has regarded it as soft wax, capable of melting and mingling in a larger mass. Thus he sets an example for his representative; the only power that devolves upon him is used, not independently, but in submission to the discipline of a party, a school, a system, a scientific or political church. He has not chosen the delegate who will best express his personal and individual aspirations, but the delegate who could be chosen also by those units of the mass whom he himself most resembles. He voluntarily obliterates himself in a joint-stock multitude. We shall meet this multitude again in all the social categories, in all classes. It is constantly inferior to the individuals who compose it. Whether we are dealing with a parliament or an academy, it is always dominated by the one of its members who represents the most "values." In order to represent values in a multitude one must be able to bend to its demands at the very time when one would like to impose a new conception upon it, must be able to sacrifice to it a portion of oneself, and since the members of the representative élite make this sacrifice—in fact, the most important of all—in order to mass social units behind their own ambition, why wonder when they endeavor to impose upon their contemporaries and on future generations a uniform mode of thought? They wish to govern beings who will get together easily, and this is why they teach the people uniform morals, official science, and persuade them little by little that the sole duty of an individual consists in solidarity with the rest of mankind, in making the mutual relations of men more easy and agreeable.

They are logical with themselves, these people, who, in the

governing assembly, are forced to shape themselves after the image of their party, when they try to compel the nation also to model itself upon a single type, and they are logical, furthermore, when they declare that the nearer an individual approaches this type, the more worthy he is to take his seat among them and share in their glory.

But this typical individual, being the creation of a majority which is of necessity forbidden to neglect a single one of its members, can be in his turn only an average individual as compared with the members of this majority. However, the entire present social organization is laboring to produce this mediocre being. The university and the government are alike working to this end.

VI.

As soon as he has left his family the pupil learns to submit to the exigencies of programs. He is subjected to masters who themselves are amenable to the decrees of the minister of education, and the minister remains in power only on condition that he show a common purpose with parliament. The social edifice rests with its entire weight upon the originality of the child's mind.

Programs of study guide him to the secondary examinations. The pupil must obtain the "satisfecit" of the managing élite if he wishes to profit by the learning he has already acquired. And now we come to the competitive examinations. We are attempting to discover the best in this gathering of candidates. The best? Those whose originality will jar least the majority of the judges. And thus selection works from one competition to another. Having reached the end of his official instruction, the young man, if, indeed, he is still young, has so devoted himself to avoiding offense to any of his masters by his own initiative that he cannot even recall his early enthusiasms. He is cowed and muzzled. Have no further fear lest he rebel against official learning.

Consider that in order to become doctor or surgeon in the hospitals of Paris the candidate is undergoing competitive examinations

from the age of twenty to that of thirty-five. He must satisfy the jury of day treatment and the jury of house treatment, and if he aims to become a surgeon he must be satisfactory to the jury or adjuvants, then to the jury on prosecutors, then to the three professors, who will nominate him for assistant chief of some clinique, later chief of this clinique, and finally he will become physician or surgeon at the central office before he can be chosen incumbent of a regular practice.

We know very well that nepotism intervenes and falsifies the results of this series of tests. Certain savants make the task easy to their pupils, and thus succeed in creating a class of superior individuals. But nepotism is regarded as a plague by democracies, and very justly, for while it is profitable in the case we have just cited, it manifests itself frequently in another form: The governing élite, properly so called, the political representatives of the people, bring pressure to bear upon the verdict of the judges, and thus again we meet the confusion between qualitative and quantitative values. Is it not the administration of Public Assistance which appoints as regular incumbent of a practice the physician from the central office?

We have taken as an example medical studies in Paris, but the same criticism applies to all the academies.

While the university is charged with watching over the classification of minds, the government is charged with regulating the relations of social units with one another and with the state.

The average commonplace individual rules in the government—what an absurdity! What a crushing series of wheels! If an official proposes a reform it simply cannot receive consideration until it has been indorsed as necessary by sub-chiefs and chiefs of bureaus, by sub-prefects and prefects, by chiefs of division, by commissions, by the minister's cabinet and the minister himself, and by Parliament.

Every new and original idea, whether belonging to the intellectual realm or touching the organization of the state, must therefore overcome innumerable obstacles before it can be put into execution. Scholars, professors and officials are not ignorant of this fact. They devote themselves solely to the search for what will please the greatest number. To be unlike other people reduces the chances of

success. They develop in themselves not merely the spirit of discipline, but that mediocrity which they must attain in order to succeed.

VII.

In the hands of these slaves of democracy, whose brains are like those of Chinese mandarins, and, we believe, of an equally sterile beauty, the masses themselves are constantly oppressed. In the name of their own welfare they are subjected to an intolerable hygiene. Hygiene? The word is very fitting. For have we not invented social pathology?

Yes, society would seem to be like a human organism. In the railways we have the arteries of this unique body; the farmers and workingmen are the cells of the muscles; the government is the brain, or perhaps the heart; the succession of representative élites seems to correspond to a nervous system with its ganglions and brain centers.

Take note that this organism must aim at one single object—to keep in good order. If it is ill it must be cured. If it is not ill we are in fear lest it become so. Close the window in the evening when the air is pleasant to breathe. The dream which you are following along the vault of heaven, and which grows as the light diminishes, will perhaps make you happy—but look out for that awful bronchitis.

Have you ever known the unfortunate man who, being all plastered over with neurasthenia, surrenders himself to twenty doctors, nurses at one and the same time his stomach, his kidneys, his bladder and his lungs, takes his reactions and weighs out the rations of his diet? He is fearful of emotions which may accelerate his heart action. He remains motionless save when he is promenading methodically, watch in hand, in order to obey the rules of hygiene. He is devoting himself with desperation to the equilibrium between the functions of his organs. Their individual gratification is a matter of indifference to him. He even forbids them any pleasure which would excite them individually. Does he ever imbibe alcohol? Does he ever indulge in highly seasoned food? No

mistress claims his devotion. And if by chance his brain becomes excited, quick! a bromide will calm the imprudent organ. The brain must care only for the fulfillment of its daily duty, and this duty is to remain in good health. This man exists only to keep from dying. His mental life consists only of a precise picture of the mutual relations of his organs.

And such will be the mental life of a society which regards itself as being like a human organism and concentrates its attention upon hygiene. Melancholy ideal!

But let us turn from this comparison. There is no evidence that it is correct, and if it should become so we should be horrified at the result. For the present at least the individual is something more than the cell of an organism, and the farther removed he is from this degradation the more he suffers from the oppression which society imposes upon him.

In order that his voice may be heard he must ally himself with others like him. But what if he do not find his like? The mob begins to cross-question him and is offended. He is hindering the movements of the passers-by, those regular and precise movements which are the glory of social harmony. All the territory in the streets, the city, the fields and even on the hills has been surveyed. The earth is peopled with automatons who follow with empty gaze their daily tasks. And the independent individual stands still and turns his eyes inward and proposes to develop within his own self in accordance with his beliefs. But they elbow him and drive him away. He is dreaming, the vagabond; well, then, let him write down his dreams. Society is now calling for the analytical drama; to-morrow it will be the drama of chivalry. He is crowded toward the theater, toward the libraries. He must choose. And if he wishes to study here are laboratories, but he must first prove that he has a useful knowledge. Alas! he knows nothing. He is dreaming for his own amusement. He is dreaming to be happy. Is he crazy? Here we dream only to fulfill a social duty, to appease or excite or instruct the masses. He flees. He seeks the neighboring mountain. He climbs into ancient solitudes. They are closely watched. No one is permitted to penetrate them without public

authority. They lead him away. Crazy in fact. They take him to an asylum. And there he will live, among real fools, intoxicating himself, in order not to die too soon, with the memory of the old emotions of other days. And now when he dies, trembling with impotent fever, listen to his cry of protest against the ideology of his contemporaries, against all these systems, all these reasonings, all these remedies. The doctors of the people have cured them of their originality and simplicity. In the name of grandiose conceptions, whose scope they never understood and scarcely the material value the doctors have slain their simple philosophy. Yet it was all they needed to guide them in tilling their gardens and breathing there the perfumes of eternity. He dies. Around him the automatons, *sans* grief and *sans* joy, pursue the play of their cadenced movements. But the time will come when the initial force will be exhausted and the automatons will stop, will coagulate, will die themselves, absorbed at last into a motionless humanity.

VIII.

Melancholy ideal! But what other can be suggested, and shall we have the boldness to suggest another? We must have that boldness if we are not to belie our convictions. Yes, we believe that we must clash with society.

While all efforts are being absorbed in furthering the triumphal march of the state, we are forgetting that social life is perpetuated only by conflicts. We ourselves exist by virtue of these conflicts. Let us go still further: It is conflicts that bring us the most agreeable relations with society, and not respect for law. Social life furnishes us merely garments for our disguise, and we are expected to learn to mask our mode of seeing and feeling, despite the grand and eternal initial force, the ego, the imaginary or real individuality that dwells within each one!

Oh, let us cease to give first place to the question of the relation of the units of society! Let political economy and sociology keep their place, which is by no means the foremost among the sciences indispensable to man. The material well-being which they are so

much concerned with distributing to us equally is not sufficient. It is the oil which lubricates the wheels of the machine, but not the fuel that makes the wheels go round. And this fuel, this mysterious energy, is furnished neither by economists nor by sociologists, nor by the mediocre representative élites of our present-day democracies. Let not the present age be reproached for the one that preceded the French revolution! That was the time when everybody wanted freedom of individual development, and freedom is a fair Utopia, which means precisely the independence of the "ego." The organization that is held up to us as a new religion restricts the liberty of each in behalf of the liberty of all. It is the very negation of this "ego," of this grand source of life, of this sole atrium, whence the individual may constantly derive new vigor.

And if it is impossible to-day to suppress these representative élites, these agencies of leveling, these factors of individual weakness, let us at least labor to make them better by diminishing their power, by tolerating alongside of them élite individuals, by trying in all possible ways to increase the number of these élite individuals, these heroes whose activity is not regulated by the needs of the state nor by the concerns of the passing hour.

In the society which our economists and sociologists are busy creating the demi-gods will probably be regarded as faulty wheels, as too noisy wheels, disturbers of political harmony. Those who are named Galileo, or Newton, Lavoisier or Kepler, Spinoza or Shakespeare, Descartes, Montaigne, Racine, Pascal, Goethe, Schopenhauer or Nietzsche do not produce works for the man who restricts his rôle in life to being one unit in the multitude, nor for the one whose aims and emotions are created solely by the desire to evolve in this multitude without offending anyone else. They produce works that give to life the savor of a divine fruit. They increase our consciousness; they rouse those who have fallen into the sleep of indifference; our dead arise at the sound of their voices. They stir our ashes and transfuse them with life; they fill our poor existence with suggestions of a thousand other possible existences, for which our hearts throb. They are the deep and shifting mirror of the centuries past. They create resting places of the soul in

order to soar in pursuit of dreams. They force back the boundaries of the unknowable to intoxicate us with a still greater mystery. They raise us above common mortality. They guide us toward the peaks where the thorns of morality no longer grow, where one no longer feels the weight of the laws which govern the relations of equal individuals, but where the breezes of the summits are warmed by the bare rocks and intoxicate and exalt us. They cause each one of us to find the world within himself and to glow with enthusiasm when he becomes aware of it. But they do all this to arouse their own enthusiasm, to mount still higher, and not to condescend to us.

In sooth, they would disturb the perfect hygiene of an harmonious society. But what of that? Nietzsche was diseased. Let us not excite the reactions of this genius! His direct influence upon his contemporaries has been opposed to morality, and every day we are shocked by the follies that are done in his name. But what of it? He gave us his heart for food. What does it impart against the glory of Goethe that Werther led several hundreds of young people to suicide? And yet our democracies will be logical if they complain of Nietzsche and Goethe. And how quickly they will send to the dungeon this King Ludwig II of Bavaria, who lived amid the paraphernalia of a perpetual ecstasy; this madman, who watched over the birth of Wagner's tetralogy and who forces us to think. And Verlaine, and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, and Poe, the dipsomaniac. For the fact is that all these fellows, these diseased beings, irritate intolerably the brain of the masses and might impart to some of them the desire to grow.

And how will the society that we would pave the way for deal with such men? Would not Hugo in his age burst the narrow bounds of a phalanstery?

Ah, well! we must create men who burst the bounds of phalansteries; but to bring this about we must struggle with ourselves; we must repeat to ourselves constantly that we must never lower ourselves to the mob, that body whose sole function should be to nourish individuals by consuming itself—that the multitude has not the right, even through the medium of its representative élite, to judge élite individuals; that we need to exalt ourselves for ourselves; that

even the average individual must find in himself the force of living, the fuel of his own energy; that he will find this sustenance in himself alone and not in that rhythmic organization where all the data are lacking. We must cry aloud that the élite individual must rise without concerning himself about the opinion of his contemporaries.

Whoever rises, though solitary, toward an ideal labors better for mankind than the tribune who concerns himself about all mankind.

Yes, we hate tight-rope dancers. We are disciples of Nietzsche, presumptuous and beside ourselves. But more mad than Nietzsche himself, for if we were creating a Zarathustra he would not descend to the mob to address it. He would write his book slowly, in his solitude, and forgetting it upon the peak where he was dreaming, he would be unconcerned, for he would know that no force is ever lost that has once manifested itself powerfully, and he would have confidence. Some passer-by would find his book when the time for it was fulfilled.

But behold! We have combined to write these studies. Oh, the melancholy symbol! Who was it that said that it would soon be impossible for a single brain to accomplish the synthesis of the universe? We make no claim of doing it, and yet we have combined. In this association may at least no particle of our two personalities be lost! We do not unite them to bring them toward a commonplace ideal. One shall be added to the other, and if some confusion results, better this confusion, these conflicts, than any most perfect regulation, which should make our discussion mediocre and commonplace!

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